

CAVE OWNERS' NEWSLETTER



A publication of the Virginia Cave Board, Department of Conservation and Recreation No. 20, November 2008

Letter from the Chairman

by Thomas Lera

Managing a cave or karst landscape begins with planning. A good management plan need not take a lot of time and effort nor cost a lot of money. You can create a plan yourself or have cave experts help you. Then, when the time comes to put your plan into action, you can do it yourself, have others help you with the management, or place the management entirely in the hands of a responsible organization.

There are many issues that you should consider as you prepare a management plan. What are the specific characteristics of your cave that need protecting, and what actions and policies need to be implemented? To what extent will you allow your cave to be used by others? Who will see that the management plan is carried out?

Most of the larger and better known caves of Virginia are managed according to a plan. However, a plan created by a landowner across the valley for his cave may not be appropriate for you and your cave. Every cave is unique. A customized management plan provides peace of mind for you and your family as it protects the underground resources that you own. Don't forget to make a provision in your plan to monitor these resources in subsequent years.

Seek the help of qualified specialists to obtain an accurate and complete inventory of the cave's resources. The 11-member Virginia Cave Board may advise, assist individually, or recommend qualified experts who can help you as you draft your management plan. Contact any member directly, or write the Virginia Cave Board, using the addresses on the last page.



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White Nose Syndrome: Bad News for Bats

White Nose Syndrome (WNS) was first observed in New York in the winter of 2007 when thousands of bats were found dead or dying at four different caves near Albany. A white fungus was present around the muzzle of many of the bats and thus the condition was coined "White Nose Syndrome." Initially it was hoped that this was an anomaly, but the winter of 2008 brought about more bad news. WNS had spread to more than a dozen sites in New York and was soon discovered in the neighboring states of Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. In addition to the spread of WNS, bat fatalities of 80 to 100 percent were documented at the original sites.

The high fatality rates and spread of WNS to adjoining states has caused great concern among biologists, cavers, conservationists, and landowners. This has spawned a number of research efforts designed to determine the cause and factors affecting the spread of WNS. While the white fungus was found on many of the bats, initial research suggests that the fungus may be a secondary condition brought on by the poor condition of the bats. How WNS is spread is still unclear; the condition could be transmitted by bats,

Please see WNS on page 2

WNS from page 1

people, a combination of both, or possibly another source? Until the cause of transmission is identified, we caution cavers who visit affected sites to not use the same gear in states that are not affected by WNS.

To date, White Nose Syndrome has not been documented in Virginia. While no active sampling was conducted in Virginia this past summer, preliminary evidence collected from other projects suggest summer bat populations appear normal. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation—Division of Natural Heritage, will be conducting fall swarming surveys at selected hibernacula to gather baseline data on bats as they prepare for hibernation. These data will help researchers in the northeast by providing information on “healthy bats.”

If you would like additional information on White Nose Syndrome or want to learn more about what is being done to address this issue, please visit the Web sites below.

www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html

www.batcon.org

Rick Reynolds
Wildlife Biologist
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Verona Regional Office



Virginia Cave Board Statement on White Nose in Bat Populations

- The Virginia Cave Board supports the scientific studies being undertaken to determine the cause of "white nose" in bat populations.
- The Cave Board endorses the on-going policy of seasonal closure of caves where large numbers and/or legally protected species of bats are hibernating or have summer maternity or bachelor colonies, as identified by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- The Virginia Cave Board encourages cavers to follow gear disinfecting protocols between cave trips.
- The Cave Board asks that cavers, in the normal course of caving, report any bat mortality, anomalous behavior, unusual appearance, or high bat concentrations to Rick Reynolds at the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (Rick.Reynolds@dgif.virginia.gov, 540-248-9386).



Note to Virginia Cave Owners:

If you have anything that you would like to put into this newsletter, please e-mail the editor, Meredith Weberg, at merecaver@yahoo.com. Items of interest to other cave owners, experiences you've had being a cave owner, items that you would like to see covered here—please let me know!



Bats of Virginia

compiled by Carol Zokaites, Rick Reynolds, and Wil Orndorff

Bats are one of the most diverse mammal groups. There are more than 1,000 species worldwide, comprising about one-fifth of all mammal species. The United States is home to 45 native bat species. Situated in the mid-Atlantic region, Virginia shares the diversity of bat species found in both the Northeast and Southeast. Bats are the number one predator of night-flying insects, and all bat species in Virginia are insect eaters. Seventeen species of bats have been documented in Virginia, although only 15 are likely to be residents in the state.

Cave Bats

Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus: Virginia Big-eared Bat (Federally and State Endangered)*
Official State Bat of Virginia

Eptesicus fuscus: Big Brown Bat

Myotis grisescens: Gray Bat (Federally and State Endangered)

Myotis leibii: Eastern Small-footed Bat (Rare species in Virginia)**

Myotis lucifugus: Little Brown Bat

Myotis septentrionalis: Northern Long-eared Bat

Myotis sodalis: Indiana Bat (Federally and State Endangered)

Perimyotis subflavus: Eastern Pipistrelle Bat

Tree Bats

Corynorhinus rafinesquii macrotis: Southeastern Big-eared Bat (State Endangered in Virginia)

Lasionycteris noctivagans: Silver-haired Bat

Lasiurus borealis: Eastern Red Bat

Lasiurus cinereus: Hoary Bat

Lasiurus seminolus (likely resident): Seminole Bat

Myotis austroriparius: Southeastern Bat (Rare species in Virginia)

Nycticeius humeralis: Evening Bat

Two bats have been recorded only one time each:

Lasiurus intermedius (1 historic record, not a likely resident): Northern Yellow Bat

Tadarida brasiliensis (there is a published record): Brazilian Free-tailed Bat

To learn more about bats, visit these Web sites:

Bat Conservation International

www.batcon.org

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/

US Fish and Wildlife Service

www.fws.gov/ endangered/bats/bats.htm

US Forest Service

www.fs.fed.us/biology/wildlife/bats.html

Virginia DCR Karst Program

www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/karsthome.shtml

* "Endangered" is a legal designation under federal and/or state endangered species laws. A species listed as endangered is considered to be at risk of becoming extinct throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Endangered species laws provide protection for listed species from impacts due to human activity, and govern programs aimed at species recovery (that is, preventing extinction).

** "Rare species" are uncommon species tracked by the Virginia Natural Heritage Program.



Scary Caves, Past and Present

by Thomas Lera

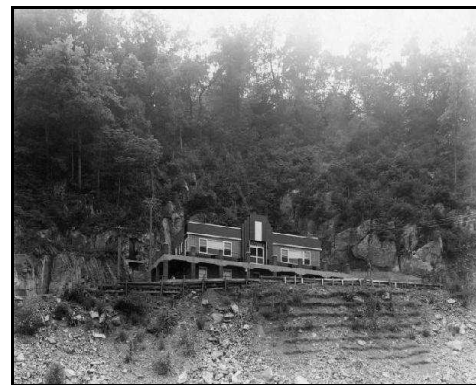
Being an avid fan of tales, tall or otherwise, especially those relating to deep, dark places, I am devouring two recent additions to my library with much relish.

Down in the Darkness by Troy Taylor, the third book in his "History & Hauntings Series," is a delightful collection of tales relating to "America's Haunted Mines, Tunnels & Caverns." Mr. Taylor has amassed an impressive collection of history and folklore ranging from the expected (Bell Witch Cave, Mammoth Cave, and Floyd Collins' Crystal Cave) to the obscure (for example, the "Flagstone Tunnels" of Goshen, Massachusetts). Whether or not you believe the tales, your enjoyment of this entertaining collection will not be diminished, especially as Mr. Taylor gives travel directions to many of the still-accessible haunted locales.

Caverns, Cauldrons, and Concealed Creatures by William Michael Mott might not appeal to every caver, but if you're fascinated by the paranormal, history, culture, and comparative mythology (as well as caves), then this book is for you. Although I do not believe the "hollow earth" theory that heavily influences this quite readable tome, Mr. Mott captured my attention by including many stories on subjects that fascinate me: caverns, dragons, H.P. Lovecraft, the Bell Witch, chupacabras, UFOs, and the Mothman Prophecies. What does *Beowulf* have in common with the *Three Billy Goats Gruff* or even the Hebrew traditions of Lilith? Read this book and find out!

In addition to the two above, I also recommend reading the following before this year's Halloween cave tours. In ***The Shadow Out of Time***, H.P. Lovecraft wrote "Later in that year I spent weeks alone beyond the limits of previous or subsequent exploration in the vast limestone cavern systems of western Virginia – black labyrinths so complex that no retracing of my steps could be considered." He was describing his visit to Endless Caverns in July 1928. This short history of the

caverns recounts how they were discovered in October 1879 on the farm of Reuben Zirkle, and opened commercially in 1920 as Endless Caverns, then being operated by Major Brown and his father Colonel E.T. Brown (no relation to Steve Spielberg's ET). Having visited the caverns several times, I wondered what they looked like in the 1920s and found a period photograph in the Norfolk and Western Historical Collection housed at the University of Virginia.



HPL also wrote in ***The Beast in the Cave***, which was supposed to have taken place in Mammoth Cave, "They were black, those eyes, deep jetty black, in hideous contrast to the snow-white hair and flesh. Like those of other cave denizens, they were deeply sunken in their orbits, and were entirely destitute of iris. As I looked more closely, I saw that they were set in a face less prognathous than that of the average ape, and infinitely less hairy. The nose was quite distinct. As we gazed upon the uncanny sight presented to our vision, the thick lips opened, and several sounds...sounds uttered by the stricken figure that lay stretched out on the limestone had told us the awesome truth. The creature I had killed, the strange beast of the unfathomed cave, was, or had at one time been a man!" This story may be one of his best.

With scenes from these books floating through my head last year, I visited two commercial caves for their

Scary Caves from page 4

Halloween tours—Crystal Caverns and Endless Caverns, who even fogged the entire cave making it a truly eerie treat.

After reading one or all of these fascinating tales, be sure to visit one of Virginia’s commercial caves on Halloween.

Note: Dixie Caverns also has haunted Halloween tours.



New Virginia Cave Protection Sign

The Virginia Cave Board has just made available new cave protection signs. The first of these will be put into caves on the Virginia Speleological Survey's significant caves list. The next priority will be highly visited caves. If you are interested in getting a cave protection sign for your cave, contact the Virginia Cave Board.

Virginia Cave Board
 Virginia Division of Natural Heritage
 Department of Conservation and Recreation
 217 Governor Street, 3rd Floor
 Richmond, VA 23219
 Phone: (804) 786-7951
 Fax: (804) 371-2674

All Caves In Virginia Are Protected by State Law

(Code of Virginia Sections 10.1-1000 to 1008)
 Caves are unique natural environments.
 Help preserve all caves for future generations to enjoy.

In Virginia Caves It is Illegal to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write or mark upon cave walls or surfaces • Break, deface, or remove any natural material or mineral formation • Litter or dump spent carbide or other waste materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excavate, damage, destroy or remove any historic or prehistoric cultural relics, bones, or artifacts • Disturb, harm, or remove any bats or other naturally occurring organisms
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For Further Information Contact:
 Virginia Cave Board, Department of Conservation & Recreation
 203 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219 (804) 786-7951

Any violation of the provisions of the Cave Protection Act is punishable as a Class 1 or Class 3 misdemeanor. Tampering, defacing or removal of this sign is a Class 1 misdemeanor.



Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave 2008

“Feel The Fear” is Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave’s theme this year. Dixie Caverns is located off I-81 at Exit 132 in Salem, Virginia.

Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave 2008 will run every Friday and Saturday night in October. That’s October 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, 25, and 31. The hours of operation are 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. The cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children (12 and under). Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave is rated PG-13 and is terrifying to younger children (and timid adults!). For this reason, Dixie Caverns cautions “Bring children at your own discretion. There will be NO refunds!”

Every October, Dixie Caverns is transformed into the Haunted Cave. Actors and volunteers scare tourists at various scary scenes throughout the upper levels of the caverns. Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave is under the direction of David Hawks, who has created the “cave friendly” themes of terror since the mid-1990s. Cavers from area grottos (cave clubs) volunteer their efforts to “Scare for Cave Conservation.” Thanks go to Dixie Caverns owner Connie Browning for inviting cavers to use this unique opportunity to raise money for cave conservation efforts!

Mary Sue Socky
 Blue Ridge Grotto

Editor’s Note: A quick check of the Virginia commercial cave Web sites revealed that Endless Caverns in New Market, Virginia, is also having a Haunted Cave 2008. The dates are October 24, 25, 30, 31, and November 1 from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The cost is \$10 per person. According to the Web site, this is “Not recommended for small children.”



For additional information please contact the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage**, 217 Governor Street, 3rd Floor, Richmond, VA 23219 or one of the following members of the Virginia Cave Board:

Dr. David Culver
427 Foxridge Drive
Leesburg, VA 20175

Dr. Daniel H. Doctor
USGS
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, VA 20192

Ms. Barbara Funkhouser
Crystal Caverns at Hupp's Hill
33229 Old Valley Pike
Strasburg, VA 22657

Mr. Andrew Harrison, PG
3513 Grandview Drive
Richmond, VA 23225

Dr. John R. Holsinger
Dept. of Biological Sciences
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, VA 23529

Mr. Thomas Lera
7733 Inversham Drive, No. 167
Falls Church, VA 22042

Ms. Judy Molnar
Virginia Living Museum
524 J. Clyde Morris Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23601

Ms. Barbara L. Moss
7713 Shreve Road
Falls Church, VA 22043

Mr. Jesse J. Richardson
VT Urban Affairs and Planning
207 Architecture Annex
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Mr. David R. Socky
6572 Woodbrook Dr SW
Roanoke, VA 24018-5402

Ms. Meredith Weberg
8061 Kittiwake Court
Springfield, VA 22153

We're on the Web! Visit us at:

<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh/cavehome1>

**Department of Conservation
and Recreation, Div. of Natural
Heritage
217 Governor Street, 3rd Floor
Richmond VA 23219-2010
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**